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TALKS START SOON

Weapons of Offensive and Defensive Type to Be Included

Text of Johnson's statement will be found on Page 2.

By PETER GROSE

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 1 — President Johnson announced today that the United States and the Soviet Union have agreed to open talks "in the nearest future" that would be aimed at limiting and reducing both offensive nuclear weapons and defensive antimissile systems.

This long-sought accord opens a new phase in East-West efforts to halt the arms race.

The agreement came as the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union, as well as 58 nonnuclear nations, signed the treaty to prohibit the spread of nuclear weapons, which had been more than six years in negotiation.

Mr. Johnson, speaking at a White House signing ceremony — parallel ceremonies were held in London and Moscow — declared:

"This treaty is the most important international agreement since the beginning of the nuclear age."

"Agreement has been reached between the Governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States to enter in the nearest future into discussions on the limitation and reduction of both offensive strategic nuclear weapons delivery systems and systems of defense against ballistic missiles."

The treaty will now go to the Senate for ratification.

Date and Place Undetermined

White House aides said that the exact date and place for the talks and the composition of the negotiating teams are yet to be decided.

State Department experts are said to be prepared to go to Moscow within the coming week. Qualified officials said the United States was willing to hold the discussions in the Soviet capital if the Russians were agreeable.

One White House official said the agreement to hold the missile talks was comparable in import to the opening of the Vietnam talks in Paris in May.

There seemed to be nothing in the Soviet-United States move to suggest change of

positions on the Vietnam issue. American diplomats do not expect the subject of Vietnam to be raised in connection with new disarmament proposals.

The United States was informed over the weekend of the other proposals made by Premier Aleksei N. Kosygin in Moscow today. A White House official called the proposals a "standard statement." The attitude of State Department officials was to proceed with one thing at a time.

The break in a 17-month deadlock over missile talks came last Thursday, when the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei A. Gromyko, announced that his Government was prepared to open the talks, which President Johnson had proposed in January, 1967.

The President said that "discussion of this most complex subject will not be easy."

"We have no illusions that it will be," he added. "I know the fears, suspicions and anxieties we shall have to overcome. But I believe that the same spirit of accommodation reflected in the negotiation of the present treaty can bring us to a good and fruitful result."

The immediate reaction on Capitol Hill was enthusiastic. "The world can breathe the fresh air of new hope today," said Senator Mike Mansfield, the majority leader. A Republican, Senator Charles H. Percy, said "The agreement to talk represents a step toward sanity in international relations."

Delineation of The Issues

The delineation of the precise issues will undoubtedly consume much of the negotiators' efforts in the early stages. Both sides agree on the fundamental approach: first a limitation on the scope of both countries' missile launchers, then a reduction in both nations' stockpiles.

Mr. Gromyko mentioned this two-phase approach in his remarks Thursday. Mr. Johnson deliberately used the same formulation today, White House aides said.

The proposed limitations are to encompass both intercontinental ballistic missiles, which are offensive weapons, and the costly antiballistic missile defensive systems that the United States has long hesitated to build for fear of setting off a new spiral of arms expenditures.

The United States officials doubt that the limitations will be expressed in absolute numbers, partly because the Russians have a deep reluctance to discuss the size of their stockpile. A more likely formula would be to set a moratorium on new construction.

No Cutback Indicated

Proceeding on that basis, Administration officials have not indicated that there will be any cutback in the construction of the \$5.5-billion Sentinel antiballistic-missile system, the start of which the Senate approved only last week.

The main rationale for construction as advanced last fall by the then Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, was to defend the country against the threat of Chinese Communist nuclear missiles in the more distant future.

The idea for the missile talks can be traced to a letter from President Johnson to the then Premier, Nikita S. Khrushchev, in January, 1964. He called on the Soviet leadership to join the United States in presenting proposals to the Geneva Disarmament conference "to place limitations on nuclear weapons systems."

That suggestion passed through many "twists and turns," according to White House officials, while the two capitals directed their prime diplomatic effort to the conclusion of the related treaty to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Kosygin Widens Agenda

The United States interest, as expressed last year, was in barring the construction of anti ballistic-missile systems. The Soviet Premier, Aleksei N. Kosygin, told President Johnson at their meeting a year ago in Glassboro, N. J. that offensive missiles as well as defensive system should be included. The United States raised no objection. aaaa

Some United States officials believe that Soviet agreement on the talks came now because of a desire to show nonnuclear nations that the nuclear powers were moving to restrain armaments.

The reluctance of some non-nuclear countries to sign the treaty against proliferation continues to cause concern in both Washington and Moscow. Among the noteworthy absentees at the three ceremonies today were West Germany, India and Brazil, all of which have expressed reservations about foregoing their own nuclear development.

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